

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Commissioner Pam Bucy, DLI; Commissioner John Cech, OCHE; Pam Watson, MT SWIB; Mathew Springer, SWAMMEI Project Director; Annie Glover, Governor's Office

**CC:** Mae Nan Ellingson, MT Main Street; Jim Molloy, Governor's Office

**FROM:** Lindsey Woolsey, Woolsey Group

**DATE:** October 8, 2014

**RE:** Follow up – Observations and Recommendations for Sector Strategies in Montana

It was a pleasure to spend the week of September 22-26 in Helena. I truly saw and heard something different in the way your industry partners and program leaders are approaching their interactions that I did not see when last engaged by the SWIB in 2007.

This memo offers observations and recommendations that I hope will help Montana move forward quickly on what I see as clear momentum and opportunity for systems alignment and improved on-the-ground services to industry. I thought it beneficial to share this broadly since so much of your work must overlap to achieve high impact.

I would welcome individual and/or group follow up conversations on any of the content in this memo. I will also individually follow up with each of you if I have not already.

### Overall Recommendations

#### **Be strategic, purposeful and clear about your vision for “sector strategies.”**

Strong interest in “sector strategies” by multiple stakeholders exists. Don't lose momentum here! Keep talking about it, but start getting clear about a shared vision and message.

- **Clarify and confirm a vision for the *right* “sector strategy infrastructure” for Montana.**
  - **Be clear and pro-active about what a “sector partnership” is** (it is: local, one industry, convened by a credible 3<sup>rd</sup> party, industry driven, heavily focused on workforce issues but not solely, and typically more than one sector partnership for the same industry exists in one state);
  - **Imagine the rough map of local sector partnerships for Montana.** Use your common sense and rough knowledge of industry data: where do we have some concentration of industry (e.g. manufacturing in Billings; in Helena; in Missoula/Kalispel; Or Healthcare? Energy?); where do we already see potential for industry readiness to come together?; is there a logical convener in any of these local areas who may be credible and able to do this work (with a little coaching and training)?
  - **Be clear about the short-term and long-term role of KINs** (start by just thinking through Manufacturing and Energy, then Healthcare): A KIN should be the statewide voice of one industry that can help influence policy and practice changes in government that will help support that industry's growth. KINs cannot respond to every company's needs, nor can they capture the nuances of distinct local economies. They can use their

network to help seed the development of local sector partnerships in their industry, and they can over a longer term be a clearinghouse for repeated themes, trends, needs that might come out of local sector partnerships in their shared industry.

- **Start sending the same message** out about the multiple pieces of the vision to stakeholders, including your close colleagues, the Governor, and the field: KINs + local sector partnerships + SWAMMEI, and what they will achieve together. For example:
  - KINs: statewide forums for networking for companies in the same industry; clearinghouse and voice of industry related to needed policy and program changes at state government level; a venue for government to understand the priority issues of industry, and to move into action on the most feasible, highest impact of those issues.
  - Sector partnerships: Local, industry-driven partnerships that address the unique needs of employers in the same industry and same local labor market; single table at which industry members can access services and programs in their community; a venue for understanding ways to align and better use otherwise thinly spread public resources to support companies on behalf of jobseekers and workers in the community.
  - SWAMMEI: An opportunity to understand the capacity and expertise of Montana's unique colleges for Manufacturing and Energy (and now Healthcare – congrats!), and to experiment with making informed decisions across the colleges about program offerings, credentials, actual demand, and shared products; an opportunity to fully play out how local sector partnerships develop and sustain in these industries, and how they interact with their respective KINs.
  - Together they represent an evolving infrastructure (at the local and statewide levels, as well as across education, workforce development and economic development) that is aligned, connected and streamlined to more efficiently and effectively support Montana's Manufacturing and Energy sectors.

### **Think through the next 12 months of needed action to build your vision.**

Together, think through three levels of focus (Statewide Action and Policy, Local Program and Practice, and Industry Engagement and Partnership), and be intentional and aggressive in how you seed and support each level. I recommend giving yourselves a full year of strategic thinking and acting together to pursue designing and implementing a sector strategy approach that will sustain KINs, any sector partnerships that could emerge, and outcomes of SWAMMEI over the long term.

Consider some or all the following key activities:

- **Regular State Stakeholder meetings:** You are lucky that you are a small state, and you already work closely together. Take the next step by informally tagging yourselves the Sector Strategy team (Commissioner Bucy, Commissioner Cech, SWIB, KIN coordinators, SWAMMEI, SWIB Sector Strategy Committee Chair, perhaps others), and make a point to get together quarterly to take stock, discuss shared goals, find points of alignment, talk about pooling resources, and identifying clear actions you can take together. This may seem obvious, but it is too easy to let 6 months go by without these types of conversations. Some states (CO and OR) recently all signed charter document that formalized their ongoing sector strategy conversations and collective action.

- **Technical Assistance to Local Areas:** One of the most effective, high-impact strategies for getting lots of stakeholders on the same page about working together and working with industry is simply getting “how-to” trainings, workshops, tools and coaching out to local programs and stakeholders. There are terrific tools out there for you to borrow and customize, but this will only take you so far. Your best bet will be to make sure you are providing at least one year of intensive, hands-on guidance. Consider:
  - **Creating tools and toolkits:** As a start, check out <http://www.sectorssummit.com>. The videos are great. The Toolkit is a wealth of information. Specifically, look at: <http://www.sectorssummit.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Colorado-Sector-Partnership-Convener-Workbook--Sustainability-2014.pdf>.
  - **Providing hands-on coaching:** There are likely 2 or 3 local areas right now that could be ready to plan and launch a sector partnership. Find a way to get experienced, knowledgeable coaching to them as soon as possible.
  - **Designing and holding workshops and trainings:** Don’t limit the t.a. to just a few; start getting the message of sector partnerships out broadly. Industry champions and potential conveners will begin to emerge as a result. Be ready to give them needed coaching going forward.
  - **Establishing a Peer Learning Network:** Montana may find that very quickly there is enough traction on the ground to begin a peer support network. This is a powerful and simple mechanism for shared learning and for building momentum overall. This should include monthly phone calls, and at the right time, consider a statewide Sector Academy or Summit that brings local partnerships or local teams from around the State together.
- **Continue identifying and cultivating Industry Champions:** In the week I was with you, I saw industry champions emerging in all three settings where I was engaged (KINs, SWAMMEI, SWIB). Don’t miss out on finding ways to use their interest and energy. The SWIB in particular has a role to play in cultivating champions within specific industries and local areas that can directly catalyze the development of sector partnerships.

This is a lot of information! My intention is to seed continued thinking about how to move forward with sector strategies, and my assumption is that much of the above recommendations will likely take pulling together resources to put toward this endeavor. In my experience, one year of activities like those listed above can yield a tremendous amount of shifted thinking and positive outcomes.

I am available to talk about any of the content here, and I look forward to re-connecting.

Thank you!